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ISABEL THE CATHOLIC

Do la Reyna

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MEMOIRS
OF THE
QUEENS OF SPAIN,

FROM THE
PERIOD OF THE CONQUEST OF THE GOTHES TO THE ACCESSION OF HER PRESENT MAJESTY
ISABELLA II. WITH THE REMARKABLE EVENTS THAT OCCURRED DURING THEIR
RESPECTIVE REIGNS, AND ANECDOTES OF THEIR SEVERAL COURTS.

BY
ANITA GEORGE.

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES,

BY
MISS JULIA PARDOE,
AUTHOR OF "MEMOIRS OF FRANCIS THE FIRST," "LOUIS THE
FOURTEENTH AND THE COURT OF FRANCE," &c.

VOL. II.

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P R E F A C E.

NOT without considerable hesitation, have I approached the subject of the present volume: and gladly, had it been possible, would I have omitted it, and passed on to the next. While the glowing pages in which the pen of a master has recorded whatsoever was worthy of note in this memorable reign—the interest of the incidents largely increased by the exquisite and truly classical grace of his style—are still fresh in the memory of every lover of elegant literature, it seemed not only presumptuous, but needless to attempt the same ground. Though the beaten path may, to some minds, appear easy in comparison with the mazes of the untrodden wilderness, it is divested of all the charms of the latter, for its flowers have been rifled of their bloom and fragrance. Still, though the subject is the same, no comparison can be instituted between the important work that has been for some

years before the public and the present. Where the plan is so different, no similitude can exist. The one is a history of the times, illustrating the state of opinion and society at that period ; containing able and interesting disquisitions on the laws, the literature, the military science of the country ; and giving a terse, vigorous, and philosophical analysis of causes, as well as a faithful narrative of results ; whereas, the other is simply a biography of the sovereign, and an account of the principal events of her reign.

While no one could feel greater admiration for the inimitable beauties of the work which has secured its place among the classics to which I allude, I had derived from my studies a very different view of the subject ; and this view could not be altered even by the perusal of those fascinating pages. I engage in no laboured defence of my own opinion. I give the facts on which it is founded, and leave others to controvert it as they may. If the harsher traits of Isabel's character have been too plainly recorded in these pages, it has been from no wish to present them under a darker aspect than is their due. The simple narrative of the deeds she sanctioned needs no exaggeration to heighten its effect. Hers were errors which no pen could extenuate ; and the time that has elapsed since they were committed places them in their true light. A distinguished modern author has said truly, that with certain individuals, as with certain objects, to be seen correctly, they must be viewed from a distance. But, while the

memory of the Queen must bear the weight of reproach which she incurred, the gallant nation that she governed—a nation second to none in every good and great quality—must be entirely exonerated from the charge of innate bigotry, which has at times been brought against it by those who were wholly ignorant of its true character.

While giving as faithful and minute an account of the Spanish Queens as the materials extant permit, it has been my constant purpose to give a compendium of the History of Spain. Hitherto the sketch has been but meagre—the Spaniards have ever been more ready to enact great deeds than to record them ; and as, until the close of the fifteenth century, Spain had enjoyed little intercourse with the other powers of Europe, small note was taken beyond her own limits of her inward life. But as the art of printing became general, and as Spain rose rapidly in power and political importance, everything connected with her internal economy became of moment, and was carefully recorded both at home and abroad.

Though the reign of Isabel derives great importance from the vast amount of wealth and territory which the Crown of Spain acquired from the discovery of the New World, those of her successors (which will form the subject of the succeeding Volumes) are no less rich in interesting events. From the reign of her grandson, the Emperor Charles V., linked as it is with the great religious change that was introduced by

Luther, to those of the Fourth Charles, and his son Ferdinand, interwoven with the fortunes of the French Cæsar, and that of her present Majesty Isabel II., all are replete with remarkable and interesting details, of which a very inconsiderable portion has as yet received publicity.

NOVEMBER, 1850.

THE QUEENS OF SPAIN.

ISABEL THE CATHOLIC,

QUEEN, IN HER OWN RIGHT, OF CASTILE,

1474,

AND, BY MARRIAGE, OF ARAGON,

1479.

THE glorious events which, during the reign of Isabel the Catholic, elevated the Spanish monarchy to a height of splendour that presented a startling contrast with the state of prostration to which a portion of it had been reduced under her immediate predecessors, encircled that sovereign with so brilliant a halo, that the dazzled eyes of her national historians have overlooked her defects; and, seen through the long vista of ages, she would appear faultless, had not the less partial pens of foreign writers revealed some blemishes.

I am well aware that the iconoclast who, with daring

VOL. II.

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